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SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER REITERATES HER PRAISE FOR
EMBASSY CULTURAL PROGRAM.

¶1. SUMMARY: New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark has publicly underscored her appreciation of the US State Department's contribution to fostering people-to-people cultural links. The PM made special mention of a reception at the Ambassador's residence that was a strategic use of Public Affairs grant and representational funds. The significance of these brief words in the context of the larger congratulatory speech should not be overlooked. END SUMMARY.

¶2. On Friday night, September 22, Prime Minister Helen Clark. launched the music CD, "View From Olympus," by New Zealand composer John Psathas. This work features American saxophonist Joshua Redman as soloist.

In her congratulatory speech to the influential audience of government representatives, diplomats, cultural leaders, and sponsors the Prime Minister said, "In May of this year I was able to learn more about this extraordinary project when the United States ambassador hosted Joshua Redman and me for a reception following that day's recording."

These brief words convey a significant message for the bilateral relationship. The final production featured artists from the United States, Portugal, and New Zealand; but American Ambassador William McCormick was the only diplomat to be mentioned. The Prime Minister's acknowledgement of the American ambassador's contribution to this project was both complimentary and appreciative.

¶3. New Zealand composer John Psathas is much admired by the New Zealand Prime Minister, who cultural is also the Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage and appreciates the role the arts plays in expressing New Zealand's culture and national spirit. With this (and the fact that Joshua Redman is a leading American saxophonist) in mind, Public Affairs provided a grant in support of Redman's visit. Additionally, the Ambassador hosted a reception for key embassy contacts to celebrate the recording. We invited PM Helen Clark, and for the first time as Prime Minister (7 years!) she came to the ambassador's residence. Her experience at this event, which celebrated the artistic collaboration between an American musician and a New Zealand composer, was very positive. The Prime Minister stayed much longer than anticipated, and by the evening's conclusion the she was very relaxed and communicating well with the ambassador and other American officers.

¶4. Following this (also for the first time as Prime Minister), PM Helen Clark accepted Ambassador McCormick's invitation to attend the American Embassy's Fourth of July reception. In his speech recognizing the year's achievements, the ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for attending the "wrap-up party" for Joshua Redman's recording of Psathas' Saxophone concerto.

In her reply, the PM emphasized the friendship between New Zealand and the United States and the benefits of the many areas the two countries have in common. And now, this past Friday, September 22, she referred to the ambassador's support of John's Psathas' project in her launch of the completed recordings.

15. Post is pleased that the initial grant and reception initiated by Public Affairs generated a bridge of mutual appreciation shared by Prime Minister Clark and Ambassador McCormick and that the program had such a lasting impact. Public Affairs is pleased that our emphasis on the strategic use of grants and representational funds has enabled Post to achieve this valuable step towards greater bilateral appreciation and common interest.

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